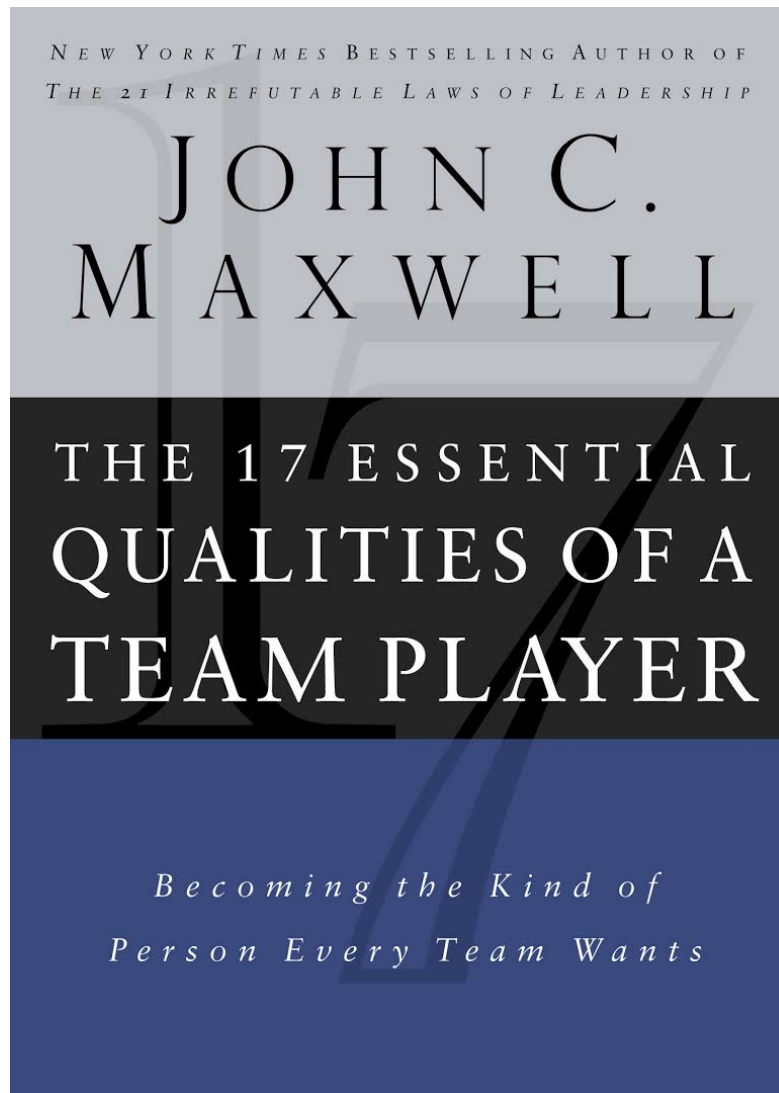


The 17 Essential Qualities of a Team Player
By John C. Maxwell
Executive Summary



From "The 17 Essential Qualities of a Team Player" by John C. Maxwell

Qualities of a Team Player #1: Adaptable

Teamwork and personal rigidity just don't mix. If you want to work well with others and be a good team player, you have to be willing to adapt yourself to your team. Harvard Business School professor Rosabeth Moss Kanter observed, "The individuals who will succeed and flourish will also be masters of change: adept at reorienting their own and others' activities in untried directions to bring about higher levels of achievement."

Adaptable people are...

- *-Teachable* – Adaptable people always place a high priority on breaking new ground. They are highly teachable.
- *-Emotionally secure* – People who are not emotionally secure see almost everything as a challenge or a threat. They meet with rigidity or suspicion the addition of another talented person to the team, an alteration in their position or title, or a change in the way things are done.
- *-Creative* – When difficult times come, creative people find a way.
- *-Service minded* – People who are focused on themselves are less likely to make changes for the team than people focused on serving others. If your goal is to serve the team, adapting to accomplish that goal isn't difficult.



Ask each member in the room to identify which of the four items above poses him/her the greatest challenge or on which item he/she most needs improvement.

To become more adaptable...

- *-Get into the habit of learning.* Try to learn something new every day.
- *-Reevaluate your role.* Are you playing the right role or is there a better one for you?
- *-Think outside the lines.* Don't let yourself get into negative ruts. Look for unconventional solutions every time you meet a challenge.

Take away

One of the greatest generals in military history was Napoleon Bonaparte. Made a full general at age twenty-six, he utilized shrewd strategy, bold cunning, and lightning speed to his advantage to win many victories. The Duke of Wellington, one of the general's most formidable enemies, said, "I consider Napoleon's presence in the field to equal forty thousand men in the balance."

"I will tell you the mistake you are always making," Napoleon said, addressing an opponent he had defeated. "You draw up your plans the day before battle, when you do not yet know your adversary's movements." Napoleon recognized in his losing opponent a weakness that he himself did not have: lack of adaptability. If you are willing to change and adapt for the sake of your team, you always have a chance to win.

Qualities of a Team Player #2: Collaborative

Great challenges require great teamwork, and the quality most needed among teammates amid the pressure of a difficult challenge is collaboration. Notice that I didn't say "cooperation" because collaboration is more than that. Cooperation is working together agreeably. Collaboration is working together aggressively.

Becoming a collaborative team player requires a change in four areas...

- *-Perception* –See teammates as collaborators, not competitors. To collaborative team members, completing one another is more important than competing with one another.
- *-Attitude* –Be supportive, not suspicious, of teammates. If you trust people, you will treat them better. And if you treat them better, you and they will be more likely to create collaborative relationships.
- *-Focus* – Concentrate on the team, not on yourself. "True progress in any field is a relay race and not a single event."
- *-Results* –Create victories through multiplication. Collaboration has a multiplying effect on everything you do because it releases and harnesses not only your skills but also those of everyone on the team.



Ask each member to identify in which of the four areas above is he/she strongest.

To become a collaborative team player...

- *-Think win-win-win.* Usually when you collaborate with others, you win, they win, and the team wins.
- *-Complement others.* Get together with someone who has strengths in your area of weakness and vice versa and work together.
- *-Take yourself out of the picture.* Get in the habit of asking what's best for the team.

Take away

Some boys were hiking in the woods one day when they came across part of an old abandoned railroad track stretching off through the trees. One of the boys jumped up onto a rail and tried walking on it. After a few steps, he lost his balance. Another boy soon tried the same thing, and he also fell. The others laughed.

"I bet you can't do it either," he barked at the others. One by one, the boys tried it, but they all failed. Even the best athlete of the bunch couldn't go more than a dozen steps without stumbling. The two of the boys began whispering to each other, and one of them challenged the others: "I can walk on the rail all the way to the end, and so can he." He pointed to his buddy.

"No, you can't," said one of the other boys who had tried and failed.

"Bet you a candy bar each we can!" he answered, and the other boys accepted.

Then each of the two boys who had issued the challenge hopped up onto a rail, reached out an arm, locked hands with the other, and carefully walked the whole distance. As individuals, they could not meet the challenge. But working together, they easily won.

Qualities of a Team Player #3: Committed

Read the Jonas Salk story and share, if appropriate.

Many people tend to associate commitment with their emotions. If they feel the right way, then they can follow through on their commitments. But true commitment doesn't work that way. It's not an emotion; it's a character quality that enables us to reach our goals. Human emotions go up and down all the time, but commitment has to be rock solid. If you want a solid team—whether it's a business, ball club, or marriage—you must have team players who are solidly committed to the team.

Four things every team player needs to know about being committed...

- *-Commitment usually is discovered in the midst of adversity.* People don't really know whether they are committed to something until they face adversity.
- *-Commitment does not depend of gifts or abilities.* Commitment and talent are not connected—unless you connect them.
- *-Commitment comes as the result of choice, not conditions.* Far too many people think that conditions determine choices. More often, choices determine conditions. When you choose commitment, you give yourself a chance for success.
- *-Commitment lasts when it's based on values.* A commitment to something you believe in is a commitment that is easier to keep.



Ask each member what he/she is committed to and what drives that commitment.

To improve your level of commitment...

- *-Tie your commitments to your values.* Compare your personal and professional commitments with your personal core values. Do they support each other?
- *-Take a risk.* George Halas asserted, "Nobody who ever gave his best regretted it."
- *-Evaluate your teammates' commitment.* Examine your relationships to see whether you are reluctant to commit because the potential recipient is untrustworthy.

Take away

Let me tell you how Hernan Cortes defined true commitment. In 1519, under the sponsorship of Cuba's Governor Velasquez, Cortes sailed from Cuba to the Mexican mainland with the goal of gaining riches for Spain and fame for himself. Though only 34 years old, the young Spanish captain had prepared his whole life for such a chance.

But the soldiers under his command were not as dedicated as he. After he landed, there was talk that the men might mutiny and return to Cuba with his ships. What was his solution? He burned the ships. How dedicated are you to your team? Are you totally committed, or do you have an "out," just in case things don't work out? If so, maybe you need to burn a ship or two. Remember, there is no such thing as a halfhearted champion.

Qualities of a Team Player #4: Communicative

Share the *Remember the Titans* story, if appropriate.

Without communication, you don't have a team; you have a collection of individuals.

Communicative players...

- *-Do not isolate themselves from others.* The more teammates know about each other and about the team's goals and methods, the more they'll understand. The more they understand, the more they'll care. A player with passion as well as information and connection is a powerful asset to the team.
- *-Make it easy for teammates to communicate with them.* If you look at good leaders and impact players on a team, you will find that they not only stay connected with their teammates; they also make sure their teammates are able to make contact with them easily.
- *-Follow the twenty-four-hour rule.* Without communication, bad situations just fester. If you have any kind of difficulty or conflict with a teammate, don't let more than 24 hours go by without addressing it.
- *-Give attention to potentially difficult relationships.* Relationships need attention to thrive. That is especially true of relationships between people who have potential for conflict.



Ask each member to identify which characteristic above, if any, is the hardest one to routinely employ.

To improve your communication...

- *-Be candid.* Open communication fosters trust.
- *-Be quick.* When you discover an issue with teammates, find the first reasonable opportunity to address it with them. And invite others to do the same with you.
- *-Be inclusive.* People are up on things they're in on.

Take away

A story called "The Lion and the Three Bulls," written by the Greek fable writer Aesop, gives insight into how important it is for teammates to be communicative. Three bulls lived together for a long time in a pasture. Though they ate and lived side by side, they never spoke with one another. One day a lion came along and saw the bulls. The lion was very hungry, but he knew that he could never attack three bulls at once because together they would overpower him and kill him. So the lion approached the bulls one at a time. Since one bull never knew what the others were doing, they didn't realize that the lion was working to separate them. The lion, who was crafty, succeeded in dividing them, and with them successfully isolated, he attacked them individually. Thus he overcame all three of them and satisfied his hunger.

Aesop concluded the story by stating, "Union is strength." But there can be no union without good communication.

Qualities of a Team Player #5: Competent

Share Bob Taylor's story, if appropriate.

The word *competent* sometimes is used to mean "barely adequate." In this discussion, it means "to be well qualified, fit." Competent team members are very capable and highly qualified to do the job and do it well.

Four things highly competent people have in common...

- *-They are committed to excellence.* John Johnson in *Christian Excellence* writes, "Success bases our worth on a comparison with others. Excellence gauges our value by measuring us against our own potential. Success grants its rewards to the few but is the dream of the multitudes. Excellence is available to all living beings but is accepted by the...few."
- *-They never settle for average.* The word mediocre literally means "halfway up a stony mountain." To be mediocre is to do a job halfway, to leave yourself far short of the summit.
- *-They pay attention to detail.* Dale Carnegie said, "Don't be afraid to give your best to what seemingly are small jobs. Every time you conquer one it makes you that much stronger. If you do little jobs well, the big ones tend to take care of themselves."
- *-They perform with consistency.* If 99.9% were good enough, then 22,000 checks would be deducted from the wrong bank accounts in the next 60 minutes and 12 babies would be given to the wrong parents today alone.



Ask each member to share whether he/she thinks any of the above are lacking in his/her unit.

To improve your competence...

- *-Focus yourself professionally.* What is the one thing that brings together your skills, interests, and opportunities? Whatever it is, seize it.
- *-Sweat the small stuff.* Develop an ability to get all the details right. That doesn't mean becoming a micromanager or control freak. It means doing the last 10% of whatever job you're doing.
- *-Give more attention to implementation.* How can you close the gap between coming up with ideas and putting them into practice? Get your teammates together and discuss how you can improve the process.

Take away

A sea captain and a crusty chief engineer were talking one day, and they began to argue about whose expertise was most needed for the running of the ship. The debate got more and more heated, and finally the captain decided that they should trade jobs for a day. The chief engineer would be on the bridge, and the captain would go down to the engine room. Only a few hours into their shift, the captain emerged from below decks sweating, his face and uniform covered with dirt and oil.

"Chief," he bellowed, "you need to get down to the engine room. I can't get her to go."

"Of course you can't," barked the chief. "She's aground!"

Qualities of a Team Player #6: Dependable

Share Christopher Reeve's story, if appropriate.

Dependability is certainly important to every team's success. You know it when you have people on your team upon whom you *cannot* depend. Everyone on the team knows it. Likewise, you know the ones you *can* depend on.

The essence of dependability...

- *-Pure motives.* If someone on the team continually puts himself and his agenda ahead of what's best for the team, he has proven himself to be undependable. When it comes to teamwork, motives matter.
- *-Responsibility.* While motivation addresses *why* people are dependable, responsibility indicates that they *want* to be dependable.
- *-Sound Thinking.* Dependability means more than just wanting to take responsibility. That desire must also be coupled with good judgment to be of real value to the team.
- *-Consistent contribution.* Consistency takes a depth of character that enables people to follow through—no matter how tired, distracted, or overwhelmed they are. Winston Churchill once said, "It is not enough that we do our best; sometimes we have to do what's required."



Ask each member to identify which of the above most often lacks and, therefore, gets in the way of being dependable.

To improve your dependability...

- *-Check your motives.* Spend some time working to align your personal priorities with those of your team.
- *-Discover what your word is worth.* Ask five teammates, "When I say that I intend to do something, how reliable am I? Rate me on a scale of one to ten." How do the answers compare with your expectations? Do you have work to do?
- *-Find someone to hold you accountable.* You are more likely to follow through and develop dependability if you have a partner to help you. Find someone you respect to help you keep your commitments.

Take away

In the mid-1800s during an economic depression, many state governments in the US began to panic and started looking for solutions to their financial hardships. Pennsylvania, for example, simply declined to pay its debts in order to remain solvent, despite what many considered to be a relatively strong financial position. When the legislature of the state of Ohio considered following Pennsylvania's example, Stephen Douglas, who eventually became a U.S. senator and ran unsuccessfully for president, resolved to try to prevent it. Unfortunately at the time he was deathly ill and restricted to his bed. But Douglas was determined. He had himself carried into the state legislature on a stretcher, and lying on his back, the "Little Giant," as he was known, spoke out against the policy. Due to his efforts, the legislature decided not to default on its obligations; instead, it met them. After the difficult economic times were over, the state prospered. It has been speculated that one of the reasons was that the government's dependability helped to set the stage for economic prosperity. Never underestimate the long-reaching benefits that being dependable can bring.

Qualities of a Team Player #7: Disciplined

Discuss Bill Toomey's story, if appropriate.

Discipline is doing what you really don't want to do so that you can do what you really want to do.

Disciplined players must possess...

- *-Disciplined thinking.* If you keep your mind active, regularly take on mental challenges, and continually think about the right things, you will develop the disciplined thinking that will help you with whatever you endeavor to do.
- *-Disciplined emotions.* You can master your emotions or they can master you. That doesn't mean that to be a good team player, you have to turn off your feelings. But it does mean that you shouldn't let your feelings prevent you from doing what you should or drive you to do things you shouldn't.
- *-Disciplined actions.* Action separates the winners from the losers.



Ask each member to identify which of the above is his/her greatest strength and/or weakness.

To become a more disciplined team player...

- *-Strengthen your work habits.* Discipline means doing the right things at the right time for the right reason.
- *-Take on a challenge.* To strengthen your mind and resolve, pick a task or project that may put you in over your head. You will find yourself capable of more than you imagined.
- *-Tame your tongue.* The next time you want to lash out, hold your tongue for five minutes, and give yourself a chance to cool down and look at things more rationally.

Take away

During the fourteenth century in what is now Belgium, there lived a man named Reynald III. Reynald was a nobleman, the rightful duke over his ancestral lands, but his younger brother revolted against him and usurped him. Reynald's brother needed the duke out of the way, but he didn't want to kill him. So he came up with an ingenious plan. Because Reynald was a very large man, his brother had him put into a room with a smaller-than-average door. If Reynald would simply lose some weight, he would be allowed to leave. In fact, the usurping brother promised that if Reynald left the room, his freedom and his title would be restored.

But Reynald was not a man of discipline, and his brother knew that. Every day, the brother had trays of delicious foods delivered to his older brother's room. And Reynald ate. In fact, instead of growing thinner, he grew fatter and fatter.

A person lacking discipline is in a prison without bars.

Qualities of a Team Player #8: Enlarging

Discuss William Wallace's story, if appropriate.

Team members always love and admire a player who is able to help them go to another level, someone who enlarges them and empowers them to be successful.

Players who enlarge their teammates have several things in common...

- *-Enlargers value their teammates.* Your teammates can tell whether you believe in them. People's performances usually reflect the expectations of those they respect.
- *-Enlargers value what their teammates value.* Enlargers listen to discover what their teammates talk about and watch to see what they spend their money on. That kind of knowledge, along with a desire to relate to their fellow players, creates a strong connection between teammates. And it makes possible an enlarger's next characteristic.
- *-Enlargers add value to their teammates.* An enlarger looks for gifts, talents, and uniqueness in other people, and then helps them to increase those abilities for their benefit and for that of the entire team.
- *-Enlargers make themselves more valuable.* Enlargers work to make themselves better, not only because it benefits them personally, but also because it helps them to help others.



Ask each member to identify in which of the above areas does he/she need the most work.

To be an enlarging team player...

- *-Believe in others before they believe in you.* If you believe in others and give them a positive reputation to uphold, you can help them to become better than they think they are.
- *-Serve others before they serve you.* One of the most beneficial services you can perform is helping other human beings to reach their potential.
- *-Add value to others before they add value to you.* People will always move toward anyone who increases them and away from others who devalue them.

Take away

For as long as he could remember, a boy named Chris Greicius dreamed of someday becoming a police officer. But there was a major obstacle standing in his way. He had leukemia, and he was not expected to make it to adulthood. When he was seven years old, Chris' battle with the disease took a turn for the worse, and that's when a family friend, who was a U.S. customs officer, arranged for Chris to come as close as he could to living his dream. He made a call to Officer Ron Cox in Phoenix and arranged for Chris to spend the day with officers from the Arizona Department of Public Safety.

When the day arrived, Chris was welcomed by three squad cars and a police motorcycle ridden by Frank Shankwitz. Then he was treated to a ride in a police helicopter. They finished the day by swearing Chris in as the first—and only—honorary state trooper. The next day, Cox enlisted the assistance of the company that made the uniforms for the Arizona Highway Patrol, and within 24 hours, their people presented Chris with an official patrolman's uniform. He was ecstatic.

Two days later, Chris died in the hospital, his uniform close at hand. Officer Shankwitz was saddened by his little friend's death, but he was grateful that he had experienced the opportunity to help Chris. And he also realized that there were many children in circumstances similar to Chris'. That prompted Shankwitz to cofound the Make-A-Wish Foundation. In twenty years since then, he and his organization have enlarged the experiences of more than eighty thousand children.

There is nothing as valuable—or rewarding—as adding value to the lives of others.

From *"The 17 Essential Qualities of a Team Player"* by John C. Maxwell

Qualities of a Team Player #9: Enthusiastic

Share the Harley-Davidson story, if appropriate.

When the members of a team are enthusiastic, the whole team becomes highly energized. And that energy produces power. Industrialist Charles Schwab observed, “People can succeed at almost anything for which they have enthusiasm.”

People who bring an enthusiastic attitude to teamwork...

- *-Take responsibility for their own enthusiasm.* Successful people understand that attitude is a choice—and that includes enthusiasm. People who wait for external forces to help them spark their enthusiasm are at other people’s mercy all the time. Positive people are positive because they choose to be.
- *-Act their way into feeling.* You cannot win if you do not begin. You can’t break a cycle of apathy by waiting to *feel* like doing it. If you want to be enthusiastic, you need to start acting that way.
- *-Believe in what they do.* Believing in what you do and focusing on those positive beliefs will help you to act and to speak positively about what you’re doing. That helps to spark the fire of enthusiasm inside you, and once that starts, all you need to do is to keep feeding the flames.
- *-Spend time with other enthusiastic people.* Dennis Waitley says, “Enthusiasm is contagious. It’s difficult to remain neutral or indifferent in the presence of a positive thinker.



Ask each member to identify which of the above areas presents the biggest challenge to him/her.

To improve your enthusiasm...

- *-Show a sense of urgency.* Identify a project that you are currently less enthusiastic about than you should be. Give yourself some ambitious deadlines for completing it steps.
- *-Be willing to do more.* This week when someone asks you to do something, do what’s required and then some. Then quietly observe its impact on the team’s atmosphere.
- *-Strive for excellence.* Nothing breeds enthusiasm like a job well done.

Take away

Each year, more than 1 million people line the route of the Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena, CA, and more than 400 million people tune in via television to watch the colorful flower-covered floats of the parade that has been held every year since 1890. Though many of the floats are now created and produced by professional float-building companies, some are still designed and built by volunteers.

“It’s a lot of work, a lot of volunteers,” a float coordinator explains. “It takes about 4,000 man hours to actually build a float, and probably equally as many hours to decorate a float.”

What keeps people coming back to volunteer as members of a float team year after year? Their enthusiasm. Volunteer Pam Kontra explains, “It is a lot of fun. It’s a lot of work, and it’s a lot of time, but to see your float rolling down the road and saying, ‘I worked right there on that part!’, is so exciting to see.” That kind of enthusiasm gives an individual—and a team—the energy required to accomplish even the most difficult tasks.

Qualities of a Team Player #10: Intentional

Share the American Girl company story, if appropriate.

Successful individuals are intentional. They aren't scattered or haphazard. They know what they're doing and why they're doing it. For a team to be successful, it needs intentional people who are able to remain focused and productive, people who make every action count.

Anyone who desires to live with intentionality...

- *-Has a purpose worth living for.* Willis R. Whitney, the first director of GE's research lab, said "Some men have thousands of reasons why they cannot do what they want to, when all they need is one reason why they can."
- *-Knows their strengths and weaknesses.* The truth is that people like to do what they're good at. Playing to your strengths rekindles your passions and renews your energy.
- *-Prioritizes responsibilities.* Henry David Thoreau observed, "One is not born into the world to do everything, but to do something." That means knowing your priorities and working according to them continually.
- *-Learns to say No.* If you try to do every good thing that comes your way, you won't excel at what you were made to do.
- *-Commits to long-term achievement.* Most victories in life are achieved through small, incremental wins sustained over time. Being willing to dedicate yourself long term to the process of achievement will enable you to be more intentional.



Ask each member to identify an example of how he/she has demonstrated intentionality in his/her life.

To improve your intentionality...

- *-Explore your strengths and weaknesses.* You can't be intentional and effectively focused if you don't know yourself.
- *-Specialize in your specialty.* Your goal should be to spend 80% of your time and effort on what brings high return to you and your team.
- *-Plan your calendar with purpose.* The longer the time period you can plan with intentionality, the more you can get done.

Take away

Advice from an older gentleman to a younger one...

It's a shame you have to be away from home and your family so much," he said. "Let me tell you something that has helped me keep a good perspective on my own priorities. You see, one day I sat down and did a little arithmetic. The average person lives about 75 years. Now then, I multiplied 75 times 52 and came up with 3,900, which is the number of Saturdays that the average person has in his lifetime. It took me until I was 55 years old to think about all this in any detail," he continued, "and by that time I had lived through over 2,800 Saturdays. I got to thinking that if I lived to be 75, I only had about a thousand of them left to enjoy."

He went on to explain that he bought 1,000 marbles and put them in a clear plastic container in his favorite work area at home. "Every Saturday since then," he said, "I have taken one marble out and thrown it away. I found that by watching the marbles diminish, I focused more on the really important things in life. There's nothing like watching your time here on earth run out to help get your priorities straight."

We can't choose how much time we will get, but we can choose what we do with it. Be intentional.

Qualities of a Team Player #11: Mission Conscious

Share the Mary Hays story, if appropriate.

Many of our American Revolution brethren were mission conscious, and that sense of purpose and mission continually drove them to do what was best for their cause, their fellow fighters, and their nation.

Qualities of all mission-conscious players...

- *-They know where the team is going.* Author W. Clement Stone stated, “When you discover your mission, you will feel its demand. It will fill you with enthusiasm and a burning desire to get to work on it.”
- *-They let the leader of the team lead.* Any time a team member hinders the leader, it increases the possibility that the team will be hindered in its goals.
- *-They place team accomplishment ahead of their own.* Teamwork always requires sacrifice.
- *-They do whatever is necessary to achieve the mission.* If success can come to the team only by your compromising, trying something new, or putting your agenda on hold, then that’s what’s required.



Are there any concerns or potential dangers associated with any of these ideas?

To improve your mission consciousness...

- *-Check to see if your team focuses on its mission.* A team really isn’t a team if it isn’t going anywhere.
- *-Find ways to keep the mission in mind.* Write down the mission and place it somewhere you can see it.
- *-Contribute your best as a team member.* Once you’re sure of the team’s mission and direction, determine to contribute your best in the context of the team, not as an individual.

Take away

For twenty years, one of the most productive players in baseball was Reggie Jackson. Now a member of the Major League Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, NY, Jackson was called “Mr. October” for his legendary prowess as a batter during the play-off and world Series games in which he played.

In *How Life Imitates the World Series*, Thomas Boswell tells how Jackson, who was then with the Baltimore Orioles, once stole a base in a game without having been given the sign to do so. That was something that manager Earl Weaver didn’t allow. But Jackson, who has never lacked self-confidence, did it anyway. He was a good runner, and he believed that he knew the pitchers and catchers against whom he was playing so well that he could judge whether or not he should steal.

Later, Weaver took Jackson aside and explained why he hadn’t wanted him to steal. The next batter in the order was Lee May, a powerful hitter. With first base open and the chance of May hitting into a double play now gone, the opposing pitcher intentionally walked May. That brought up the next player in the batting order, a man who had a poor record against that particular pitcher. Weaver then had to send in a pinch hitter to try to get Jackson and May around the bases to score. As a result, he didn’t have that pinch hitter available later in the game when he really needed him.

Although Jackson was right in his assessment of his skill against the opposing team, he hurt the team. Why? Because he had his own achievement in mind and not the big picture when making a decision that affected the whole team. Good team players see more than the details of the moment. They are always conscious of a team’s mission and act to help achieve it.

Qualities of a Team Player #12: Prepared

Share the Alvin York story, if appropriate.

Spanish novelist Miguel de Cervantes stated, “The man who is prepared has his battle half-fought.”

If you want to prepare yourself so that you can help your team as it faces the challenges ahead, then think about the following...

- **-Assessment.** Preparation begins with knowing what you’re preparing for. You need to determine where you and your team are headed and you need to examine what the conditions will be along the way.
- **-Alignment.** Although you know where you want to go, you’ll never get to your desired destination if you’re not lined up right. You can’t just work hard. You have to do the right work.
- **-Attitude.** If you believe in yourself and your teammates, then you set yourself up for success.
- **-Action.** Ultimately you have to take action. Being prepared means being ready to take that first step when the time comes.



Which one of the above challenges you the most?

To improve your preparedness...

- **-Become a process thinker.** Break down your task into smaller steps
- **-Do more research.** Become more familiar with the research tools of your trade and use them.
- **-Learn from your mistakes.** The greatest preparation tool can often be a person’s own experience.

Take away

In 1946, entertainer Ray Charles heard that Lucky Millinder’s band was coming to town. Charles managed to arrange an audition, and that excited him. If he could get on with Millinder, he would be in the big time.

When his opportunity came, the young musician played the piano and sang his heart out. Being blind, Charles couldn’t see Millinder’s reaction to his performance, so when he was finished, Charles waited patiently for his response. Finally he heard the band leader say, “Ain’t good enough, kid.” Charles went back to his room and cried.

“That was the best thing that ever happened to me,” Charles later recalled. “After I got over feeling sorry for myself, I went back and started practicing so nobody would ever say that to me again.” No one has. As the saying goes, “You can claim to be surprised once; after that, you’re unprepared.” Charles’ preparation has paid him dividends for more than half a century, and he has played with some of the most talented musicians in the world. Preparation may not guarantee a win, but it sure puts you in position for one.

Qualities of a Team Player #13: Relational

Share the Ronald Reagan story, if appropriate.

Teams want people who are relational—the more solid the relationships, the more cohesive the team.

Look for the following five characteristics in your team relationships...

- *-Respect.* When it comes to relationships, everything begins with respect. Human relations author Les Giblin said, “You can’t make the other fellow feel important in your presence if you secretly feel that he’s a nobody.”
- *-Shared Experiences.* You can’t be relational with someone you don’t know. It requires shared experiences among teammates over time.
- *-Trust.* Without trust, you cannot sustain any kind of relationship.
- *-Reciprocity.* One-sided personal relationships don’t last. If one person is always the giver and the other is always the receiver, then the relationship will eventually disintegrate.
- *-Mutual Enjoyment.* When relationships grow and start to get solid, the people involved begin to enjoy each other.



Are any of the above characteristics particularly strong or weak in our current organization?

To better relate to your teammates...

- *-Focus on others instead of yourself.* The first and most important step in becoming good at relationship building is to start focusing on others rather than yourself. Don’t forget that the team is not about you.
- *-Ask the right questions.* If you aren’t sure about your teammates’ hopes, desires, and goals, then you need to ask them.
- *-Share common experiences.* Time together while working as a team is essential, but so is spending time together outside that setting.
- *-Make others feel special.* People will connect with you when you show them you care about them.

Take away

Frederick William I, the King of Prussia, was not known for having a pleasant disposition. His passion was his army, and he spent much of his life building it. He had little love for anything or anyone else, including his family. He was often cruel to his son, who eventually succeeded him on the throne as Frederick II, the Great.

The elder Frederick often walked the streets of Berlin alone, and his subjects fled from him. It is said that on one of his walks, a citizen saw him coming and attempted to escape the monarch by ducking into a doorway. “You,” called out the king, “where are you going?” “Into the house, Your Majesty,” replied the nervous man. “Is it your house?” Frederick pressed. “No, Your Majesty.” “Then why are you entering it?” the king demanded. “Well, Your Majesty,” the man admitted, worried that he might be thought a burglar, “to avoid you.” “Why?” demanded Frederick. “Because I fear you, Your Majesty.” Frederick raised his walking stick threateningly at the man and shouted, “You’re not supposed to fear me, you scum. You’re supposed to love me!”

Teammates seldom go along with someone they can’t get along with.

From “*The 17 Essential Qualities of a Team Player*” by John C. Maxwell

Qualities of a Team Player #14: Self-Improving

Share the Nokia story, if appropriate.

We live in a society with destination disease. Too many people want to do enough to “arrive,” and then they want to retire.

People who are constantly improving themselves make three processes an ongoing cycle in their lives...

- *-Preparation.* Napoleon Hill remarked, “It’s not what you are going to do, but it’s what you are doing now that counts.” Self-improving team players think about how they can improve today—not some far-off future time.
- *-Contemplation.* “If you study the lives of the truly great individuals who have influenced the world, you will find that in virtually every case, they spent considerable amounts of time alone—contemplating, meditating, listening.” Time alone is essential to self-improvement.
- *-Application.* Musician Bruce Springsteen offered this insight: “A time comes when you need to stop waiting for the man you want to become and start being the man you want to be.” You need to apply what you’ve learned.



Which of the three processes above is the most challenging for you?

To become self-improving...

- *-Become highly teachable.* Pride is a serious enemy of self-improvement. Adopt the attitude of a learner, not an expert.
- *-Plan your progress.* First, pick an area where you want to improve. Plan what books you will read, conferences you will attend, and experts you will interview for the next six months. Second, find learning moments wherever you can every day so that not a day passes without your experiencing improvement of some kind.
- *-Value self-improvement above self-promotion.* Make your next career move based on how it will improve you personally rather than how it will enhance you financially.

Take away

When Charles Lindbergh made his solo flight across the Atlantic Ocean, he flew alone for more than thirty-three hours and covered an incredible 3,600 miles. That’s not the kind of task a person just goes out and does. He has to work up to it. How did Lindbergh do that? A story from his friend Frank Samuels gives insight.

In the 1920s, Lindbergh used to fly mail out of St. Louis. Occasionally he would go out to San Diego to check on the progress of his plane, the *Spirit of St. Louis*, which was being built there. Samuels sometimes went along with him, and the two men would stay overnight in a small hotel there. One night Samuels woke up shortly after midnight and noticed that Lindbergh was sitting by the window looking at the stars. It had been a long day, so Samuels asked, “Why are you sitting there at this hour?”

“Just practicing,” answered Lindbergh.

“Practicing what?” asked Samuels.

“Staying awake all night.”

When he could have been enjoying a well-deserved rest, Lindbergh was putting forth the effort to improve himself. It’s an investment that paid off for him—and it can do the same thing for you.

From “*The 17 Essential Qualities of a Team Player*” by John C. Maxwell

Qualities of a Team Player #15: Selfless

Share the Philip Toosey's story, if appropriate.

No team succeeds unless its players put others on the team ahead of themselves.

Team members cultivate an attitude of selflessness by doing the following...

- *-Be generous.* St. Francis of Assisi stated, "All getting separates you from others; all giving unites to others."
- *-Avoid internal politics.* One of the worst forms of selfishness can be seen in people who are playing politics on the team. That usually means posturing or positioning themselves for their own benefit, regardless of how it might damage relationships on the team.
- *-Display loyalty.* If you show loyalty to the people on your team, they will return loyalty in kind.
- *-Value interdependence over independence.* In America, we value independence, but independence taken too far is a characteristic of selfishness, especially if it begins to harm or hinder others.



Do any of the above areas challenge you?

To become more selfless...

- *-Promote someone other than yourself.* If you are in the habit of talking up your achievements and promoting yourself to others, determine to keep silent about yourself and praise others for two weeks. See what happens.
- *-Take a subordinate role.* Most people's natural tendency is to take the best place and to let others fend for themselves. All day today, practice the discipline of serving and letting others go first.
- *-Give secretly.* Writer John Bunyan maintained, "You have not lived today successfully unless you've done something for someone who can never repay you."

Take away

Every fall in Atlanta, local fans start to get excited about Georgia Tech football. The Tech team is good today, but in the teens, it was an absolute powerhouse. Back in 1916, the Tech team played a tiny law school called Cumberland University, and Tech players were crushing them.

It's said that near the end of the game, Cumberland quarterback Ed Edwards fumbled the snap from center, and as the huge Tech players came barreling into the backfield, he screamed to his fellow backs, "Pick it up! Pick it up!"

The fullback, tired of being pulverized by an opponent, hollered back at the quarterback, "Pick it up yourself—you dropped it." Needless to say, Tech won the game. The final score was 222 to 0.

Qualities of a Team Player #16: Solution Oriented

Share the John Walsh story, if appropriate.

Most people can see problems. That doesn't require any special ability or talent. As Alfred A. Montapert observed, "The majority see the obstacles; the few see the objectives; history records the successes of the latter, while oblivion is the reward of the former."

Solution-seeking people recognize that...

- *-Problems are a matter of perspective.* Obstacles, setbacks, and failures are simply parts of life. You can't avoid them. But that doesn't mean you have to allow them to become problems. Be solution oriented.
- *-All problems are solvable.* If you believe it can't be done, it's likely you won't find a solution. Cultivate the attitude that all problems are solvable.
- *-Problems either stop us or stretch us.* Success magazine founder held that "obstacles will look large or small to you according to whether you are large or small." Depending on how you approach problems, they'll stop you from succeeding or stretch you so that you not only overcome them but also become a better person in the process. The choice is yours.



How do you normally deal with problems?

To make yourself a more solution-oriented team player...

- *-Refuse to give up.* Determine not to give up until you find a solution.
- *-Refocus your thinking.* No problem can withstand the assault of sustained thinking.
- *-Rethink your strategy.* Albert Einstein observed, "The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them." Get out of the box of your typical thinking.
- *-Repeat the process.* If at first you don't succeed in solving the problem, keep at it.

Take away

In 1939, Soviet troops entered and annexed the Baltic states, including Latvia. The American vice-consul in the Latvian capital of Riga observed what was happening and was concerned that the Soviet soldiers would loot the supply station of the American Red Cross. He wired the U.S. State Department to request permission to fly the American flag over the Red Cross flag to protect the supplies, but the response from his superiors said, "No precedent exists for such action."

The vice-consul climbed the flagpole and secured the American flag to it. Then he sent a message back to the State Department: "As of this date, I have established precedent."

Solutions are usually in the eye of the beholder.

Qualities of a Team Player #17: Tenacious

Share the Abbey Road story, if appropriate.

Even people who lack talent and fail to cultivate some of the other vital qualities of a team player have a chance to contribute to the team and help it succeed if they possess a tenacious spirit.

Being tenacious means...

- *-Giving all that you have, not more than you have.* Some who lack tenacity do so because they mistakenly believe that being tenacious demands from them more than they have to offer. As a result, they don't push themselves. However, being tenacious requires that you give 100%—not more.
- *-Working with determination, not waiting on destiny.* Tenacious people don't rely on luck, fate, or destiny for their success. And when conditions become difficult, they keep working. They know that trying times are no time to quit trying.
- *-Quitting when the job is done, not when you're tired.* Robert Strauss stated that “success is a little like wrestling a gorilla. You don't quit when you're tired—you quit when the gorilla is tired.” Tenacity hangs on until the job is finished.



To which of the above ideas do you most closely relate?

A. L. Williams says, “You beat 50% of the people in America by working hard. You beat another 40% by being a person of honesty and integrity and standing for something. The last 10% is a dogfight in the free enterprise system.”

To improve your tenacity...

- *-Work harder and/or smarter.* Examine your habits. You may need to put in more time or make it more efficient.
- *-Stand for something.* To succeed, you must act with absolute integrity. However, if you can add to that the power of purpose, you will possess an additional edge.
- *-Make your work a game.* Find others in your organization who have similar goals and create a friendly competition with them to motivate you and them.

Take away

People said it couldn't be done—building a railroad from sea level on the coast of the Pacific Ocean into the Andes Mountains, the second-highest mountain range on earth after the Himalayans. Yet that is what Ernest Malinowski, a Polish-born engineer, wanted to do. In 1859, he proposed building a rail line from Callao on the coast of Peru into the country's interior—to an elevation of more than fifteen thousand feet. If he was successful, it would be the highest railway in the world.

The Andes are treacherous mountains. The altitude makes work difficult, but add to that frigid conditions, glaciers, and the potential for volcanic activity. And the mountains climb from sea level to tens of thousands of feet in a very short distance. Climbing it high altitude in the aged mountains would require switchbacks, zigzags, and numerous bridges and tunnels. But Malinowski and his work crews succeeded. Jans S. Plachta states, “There are approximately 100 tunnels and bridges, some of which are major engineering feats. It is difficult to visualize how this task could have been accomplished with relatively primitive construction equipment, high altitudes, and mountainous terrain as obstacles.” The railroad still stands today as a testament to the tenacity of the men who built it. No matter what happened to them during the process, Malinowski and his team never, never, never quit.